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(54) **Mobile phone adapter for housing and switching two or more SIM cards**

(57) Adapter/switch realized in thin thickness so as to allow primarily the lodging and the connection for two or more SIM (Subscriber Identity Module) cards on a huge number of GSM cellular phones. Moreover, thanks to an appropriate switching microchip system, it allows

the enabling one or another of the cards alternatively, so that the user, through an easy manoeuvre of phone keys, can have access at any time to all services and lines, at his own will and convenience, bearing in mind the different rates applicable.

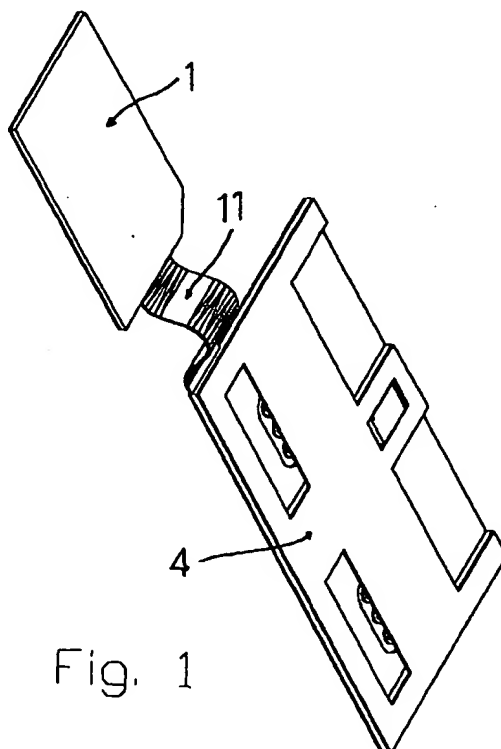


Fig. 1

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Description**Field of invention and state of the art.**

[0001] Mobile Telephony Service providers have highly different rates for different user groups. They change according to geographical position, daytime hour, typology (traditional or mobile), and service provider for the called number.

[0002] As a matter of fact, the user could save much money by using different lines and providers services (i. e. and associated rates) accordingly to his needs.

[0003] User-reserved line identification and access to provider services is managed by a microchip SIM module (or card) released by providers and inserted into the user's mobile phone.

[0004] Nowadays mobile phones can host only one SIM card and mobile network providers make available only single-line SIM card.

If a user wants to take advantage of more than one service by network at different rates, switching from one provider to another, he must physically replace the SIM card. It is an uncomfortable operation, discouraging the user to do so. She/he should in fact remove the battery, unlock the card, pull a second card out from where it is usually kept, substitute the card, and, at last, put carefully out the card removed.

[0005] This invention would prevent the above-mentioned drawbacks so that the user can place two or more SIM cards on the same telephone set at the same time and she/he would be allowed to switch from one card to the other simply by pressing the telephone keys.

Description of the invention.

[0006] The invention is composed of two parts connected both physically and electrically through a printed circuit in flexible material:

1. An interface card (1) (see fig. 1) aimed to connect the invention to the mobile phone (not in the illus.), to be inserted into the locking device for the SIM and having therefore exactly the same shape and dimensions as the SIM card.

It must have:

- Electric contacts (2) (see fig. 2) to the mobile phone (in compliance with ISO/IEC 7816-2) and, eventually, partly or wholly,
- Electronics (3) needed for the invention to work (see fig. 2).

The components can be wholly or partly hosted on any other of the invention elements, by simple changes on the circuits, without influencing its nature or functions (see fig. 1, 2 and 3).

2. A thin frame (4) (see fig. 1, 3) having two (or more) slots to place the SIM module (5). It has the electric

contacts (7) for any single card and locking devices to hold the cards in their positions and the electric contacts stable.

5 [0007] Frame dimensions, primarily thickness, allow it to be inserted in the battery slot or under an external battery. In this last case a 1mm-deep slot must be created in the lower side of the battery plastic shell.

10 Working Scheme

[0008] Two SIM cannot work properly in parallel on a same cell-phone without some precautions. This is because conflicts occur on chip I/O ports (bi-directional) on both cards. The "out of service" module must be disabled in order to prevent the second card from causing any interference to the actually operative card.

This can be achieved by interrupting even only one of the signals necessary to let the module work normally (from now on referred to as 'necessary signals'). The necessary signals are I/O and Reset or Clock. These are exchanged between the phone and the chip on the SIM card.

20 When the electric contact between the phone and the card is cut off, even if only on one of the channels bringing a necessary signal, all the SIM module functions are disabled. Any interference with the active module is then avoided. This method works on any SIM card. The remaining contacts may be connected in parallel.

25 The invention allows to enable one SIM card or the other, at will, intercepting and commuting electronically at least one of the necessary signals. Since mobile phone SIM modules cannot be removed while the phone is "ON", switch from one card to another must be done in "OFF".

30 It is the advantage of the invention the fact that SIM cards can be easily changed. Commuting can take place through a pre-set procedure, e.g. switching "OFF" and "ON" the telephone.

35 When this is the case, every time the set is switched "ON", a chip with a permanent memory on board, powered by the same Vcc, will perform the following procedure

- 40 • Retrieves last configuration set-up in permanent memory
- Intercepts one of the necessary signals coming from cell phone.
- Executes the switching by sending that signal to the module to enable. This can be achieved through a set-up scheme.
- 45 • Stores on memory the new configuration.

Description of component parts:

50 [0009] An example of the invention realization is shown in figure 1. It consists of:

1. Interface card (1)

[0010] It is the part of the invention that connects the invention to the mobile phone. It must be inserted in the SIM locking device and has its same shape and dimensions (in compliance with ISO/IEC 7816-2). It consists of a rigid PCB (Printed Circuit Board) of the necessary thickness, or of a coupled rigid-flexible PCB.

On it:

- Electrical contacts (2) to the mobile phone (ISO/IEC 7816-2 compliant), and,
- Optionally, the electronics (3) necessary to make the invention work (here the chip plastic case is thicker than the SIM, and therefore to avoid mechanic friction with the lodging and locking of the SIM card to the phone, the chip can be mounted die, or shifted in comparison to the locking device, and in any case as to minimize the protrusion)

2. Housing thin slot frame (4) for SIM modules.

[0011] It is produced by overlapping the following components:

a) A thin rigid PCB (6) (see fig. 4) having: Electric connections and contacts (7) to the SIM modules. Contacts can be made either in copper foil (or other conductible materials) welded on the printed circuit or through the realization of conductible relief on the circuit. In this last case different techniques are possible: selective accretion, soldering, and deposition and this must happen straight on the circuit itself made flexible. The flexibility can be obtained shaping (cutting in) the PCB base to get extended flexible supports (8); this gives the chance to get very limited thickness (≤ 1.5 mm). In order to work, at least one of the necessary signals must be sent to one card or another through separate electric connections, while the corresponding SIM cards contacts can be connected in parallel.

- The electronic components (3) that make switching possible (as described above), or the part of them not yet installed on the interface card;

b) A frame (9) (see fig. 5) in FR, ABS or other compatible material, as thick as the standard SIM module, shaped to host the cards and center them upon the contacts.

c) A highly resistant and elastic plastic cover (10), shaped to keep the SIM cards pressed on the contacts (see fig. 6).

[0012] The three parts must be glued and pressed together according to a procedure well known by printed

circuits manufacturers. The result is a single structure a bit thicker than 1 mm. It can be easily installed inside any cellular phone. It may be necessary to create a small slot inside the battery plastic cover or in the battery slot.

3. Flexible PCB connector (11)

[0013] The mechanic and electric connection of the above described parts is accomplished by a printed circuit produced of highly resistant and flexible material (polyimide or similar). Its thickness must be negligible when compared to the construction features of cellular phones.

[0014] Flexible connector shape and length can vary according to different cellular phone models, as a consequence of the reciprocal position and orientation that the interface card and the housing slot frame need to have in the telephone. In fact, shape and position both of the SIM locking device and of the battery can cause different shapes and positions for the lodging of the housing slot frame.

[0015] Practically, there may be many different shape and length of flexible connector, without this affecting the nature of the invention, but rather contributing to its applicability to the vast majority of cell phones on the market.

Claims

1. Microchip adapter/switch for mobile phones to housing and electronically switching two or more SIM modules, including:

- An interface card (1) by exactly the same shape and dimensions as a SIM card, to be lodged in the cell phone SIM card slot. It is connected to the phone by standard electric contacts.
- A housing thin slot frame (4) to lodge at least two SIM cards. The above mentioned interface card and this housing frame being both electrically and mechanically interconnected by a flexible connector (11)
- Commutating electronic components (3) to enable one SIM card only at a time.

2. Adapter/switch as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the electronic components (3) includes means to switch at least one necessary signal, exchanged between the telephone set and one of the SIM card lodged in the housing thin slot frame (4), from this mentioned card to another.

3. Adapter as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the electronic components (3) are placed, at least partially, in the interface card (1).

4. Adapter as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that

the above mentioned interface card (1) and the above mentioned housing thin slot frame (4) are electrically connected by a flexible connector (11).

5. Adapter as claimed in claim 2, characterized in that the above mentioned means to switch at least one necessary signal include a microchip that:
- Retrieves which SIM card is currently in use.
 - Identifies the necessary signal in use.
 - Switches the necessary signal from one SIM to another
 - Stores in memory the configuration..
6. Adapter as claimed in claim 5, characterized in that switching takes place accordingly to a pre-set procedure.
7. Adapter as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that in the above mentioned thin rigid PCB (6), flexible extended supports (8) are provided for the electric contacts (7) to the SIM cards by removing material from the circuit itself.
8. Adapter as claimed in claim 7, characterized in that one of the edge of the above mentioned flexible extended supports (8) has conductible relief.

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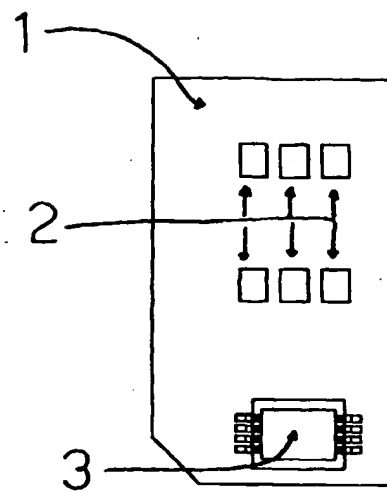
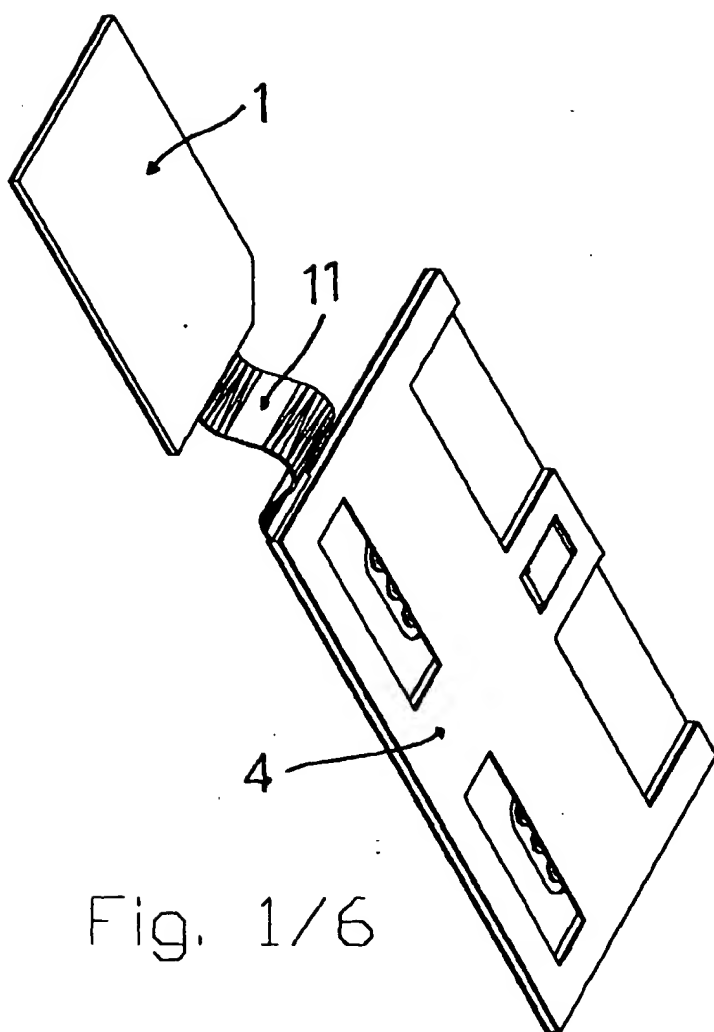
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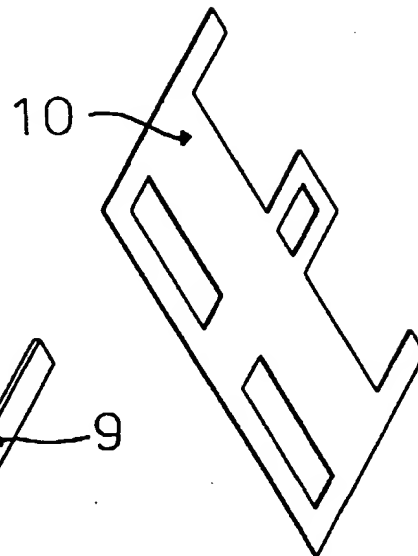
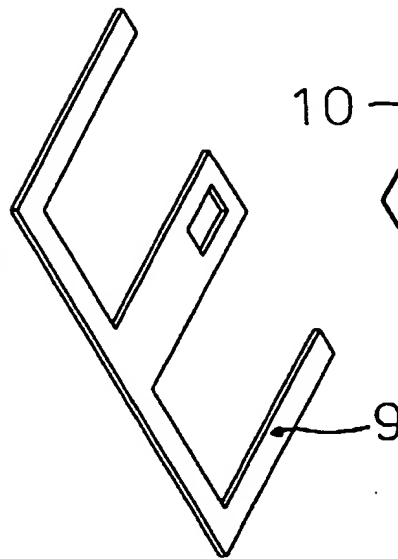
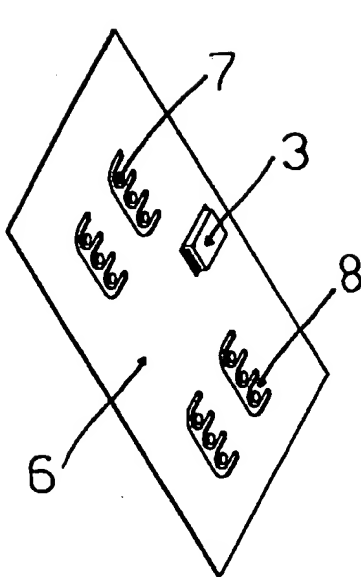
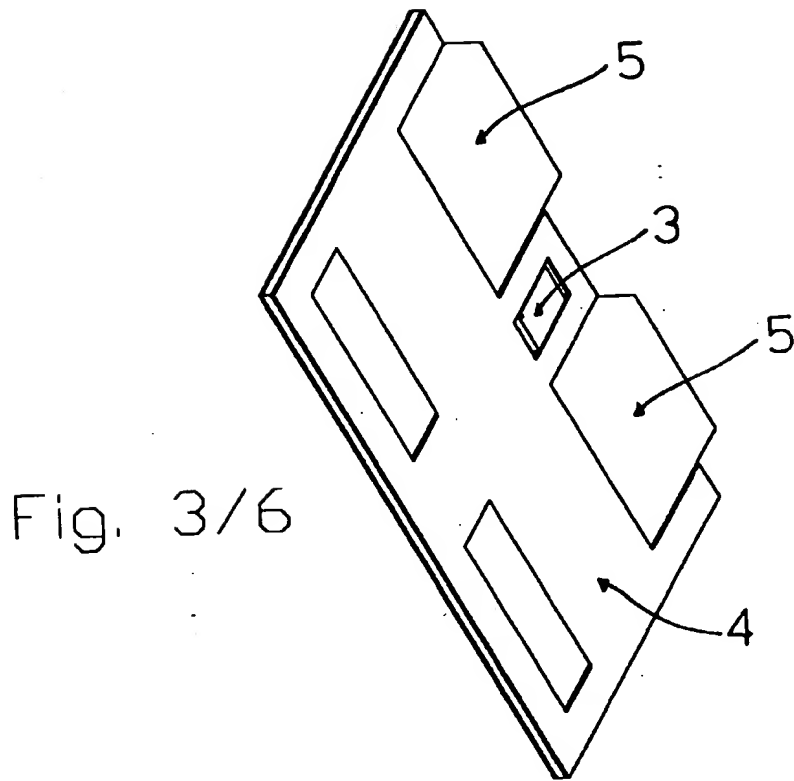
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EP 00 83 0531

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Place of search		Date of completion of the search	Examiner
THE HAGUE		19 December 2000	Psatha, H
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